

In the spirit of celebrating our nation's independence and rich history, I thought you might be interested in learning about one of the U.S. Capitol's lesser known monuments to great leaders of our past, the National Statuary Collection.

The thousands of Nebraskans who visit our nation's capital every summer come to see vibrant festivals, view the famous monuments, or visit with their Representatives and Senators. Many enjoy Washington D.C.'s numerous tributes to our shared history as Americans, and upon their visit to the Capitol building, they are also heartened to see traces of Nebraska history located inside its walls.

Lining the beautifully ornate Hall of Columns are statues of famous citizens from all 50 states. Each state dedicates two statues of people who have shaped the course of their state's history to the National Statuary Collection. Some of our most famous Americans are memorialized in bronze or marble in the halls of the Capitol, held in the company of past Presidents, human rights activists, community leaders, and inventors. I recently had the opportunity to witness the unveiling of the most recent statue of former President Ronald Reagan, who joined these ranks in early June.

Nebraska is represented in this collection by two notable individuals, J. Sterling Morton and William Jennings Bryan. J. Sterling Morton, as you may know, is a former Secretary of Agriculture and also the founder of Arbor Day. His statue is currently housed in Statuary Hall, near the rotunda of the Capitol building. William Jennings Bryan was one of my predecessors in the U.S. House of Representatives, a former presidential candidate, and a U.S. Secretary of State. His statue can now be found in the new Capitol Visitor Center, a hall below the East Front of the Capitol which just opened in December.

Every Nebraskan who visits the Capitol has an opportunity to see these two men memorialized for their contributions to our state and country. I recently filmed a video tour of these remarkable works of art, as well as the unveiling of President Reagan's statue and the new Capitol Visitor Center. The video will be available at my official website, Fortenberry.house.gov.

The U.S. Capitol reflects our collective heritage as a nation, but these touchstones also reflect our individual state of Nebraska. They impart in everyone who passes them a sense of home, and reflect that the U.S. Capitol is truly the people's building.

If you are planning a trip to our nation's capital, my office may be helpful to you in arranging tours of the Capitol building, among other landmarks. To arrange a tour on your next visit to Washington, D.C., please contact my Washington, D.C. office at 202.225.4806.